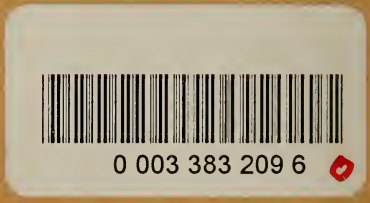
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INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM IN SWITZERLAND

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A MEMORIAL

RELATIVE TO THE INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM IN SWITZERLAND

BY

CARL S. VROOMAN

PRESENTED BY MR. OWEN

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THE INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM IN SWITZERLAND.

By Carl S. Vrooman.

The personality of Switzerland, like that of Italy, is unique. But while the all-pervasive and dominant influence south of the Alps is that of art, in the little Republic to their north the omnipresent, evercreative national spirit is the spirit of democracy. Upon entering its borders the observant traveler finds himself lifted into an atmosphere of intellectual liberty, political equality, and social justice. In fact, the work of this "political experiment station of the world" is of such incomparable importance that a first-hand knowledge of its methods and institutions has become as invaluable to the student of politics as is a personal acquaintance with the masterpieces of Italian paintings to the student of art.

Among the institutions in operation there, the most important is the initiative and referendum—a system of direct popular control of the lawmaking power, which has been adopted elsewhere to a limited degree. Its results have attracted the attention of students the world over, and tempted travelers to a more than passing inquiry. Many a tourist has turned amateur investigator, and converted, as I did, his Swiss sojourn into something of a political pilgrimage.

The referendum is in the air and you can not escape it. You meet it at every turn; you hear of it in the restaurants, on steamship docks, in the railroad trains. Almost every chance acquaintance has at least a word to say regarding it. It was but a few hours after I had unpacked my luggage at Lucerne that I began to hear of it and its benefits. Next to me at the table d'hote dinner sat a big raw-boned Texan and beside him a small Swiss gentleman with a pointed beard. Their conversation bore upon this interesting institution, which my compatriot was by no means sure could be adopted with profit by the United States.

"I reckon this referendum, as you call it, may work all right in a little two-by-four country like yours," said the Texan, "but you needn't get puffed up on that account, and try to teach a country that can whip all Europe."

"I hope you will not forget," replied the Swiss, "that my country has a larger area than some of your States and a larger population than the average of them. Therefore, if the referendum has worked well in Switzerland, as everyone concedes it has, unless you can find some better objection than your unwieldy bulk, you must admit that it would work well in your separate States. We tried it first in two or three of our cantons, where it proved so successful that one by one the other cantons adopted it, and finally, when by

the unmistakable test of experience we had proved its incomparable merits, we adopted it for the nation. Try it in your States first, and have no fear it will win its own way in your Nation."

"Perhaps I don't entirely understand the workings of this referendum," said the Texan.

"I have figured it out," said a Yankee across the table. "You say you are a stock raiser. Suppose you were to tell your hired man to fence off a certain lot for the hogs, and he'd reply that he would do nothing of the kind. What would you do?"

"I'd discharge him, sir, in one-half minute, sir," said the southerner.

"Quite right. But, suppose a little later another farm hand, on being told to plant a certain field in cotton, were to plant it in oats, what would you say to that?"

"I'd order him off my premises, sir."

"But," continued the Yankee, "are not State representatives and Congressmen the servants of the people?"

"Assuredly, sir," replied the Texan, anticipating the other's idea, "but in America, if our Congressmen pass a law which we do not like, or neglect to pass a law we want, we turn them down, sir, at the polls at the very next election."

"Indeed!" replied the Yankee, "but to go back to the farm hand, would you want him around your place for two years, squandering your money, neglecting your interests, disobeying and insulting you, before turning him down or knocking him down, as the case might be? I think not. You need not wait till the next election to veto a measure you don't want or to get one that you do. It is very simple; you merely go over the heads of your servants when they cease to observe your wishes. Why should the people wait until another election befure turning down such rascals as the members of the Legislature of Illinois, who in 1898 gave to Yerkes $25,000,000 worth of franchises in spite of the protests of nearly the whole Commonwealth? To defeat such men at the polls is to lock the door after the horse is stolen. This fatal political procrastination is only too common in the United States. Take another example: Some years ago the United Gas Improvement Co., of Philadelphia, got control of the city council at a good fat figure, and was thus able to lease for 30 years at an exceedingly lean and low figure the gas plant which the city had owned and operated for 56 years. This nauseating performance was violently but ineffectually opposed by every decent American 'sovereign' in the city. The referendum would have made such a steal impossible."

"If that is the referendum and initiative, sir," said the Texan, "if it simply means being obeyed by our public servants, why, that is democracy, and you can count not only on me but on a 200,000 majority for it in Texas as soon as our people have come to understand it. And mind you, what we are ready to vote for down there we are ready to fight for."

"Don't, pray, let us even discuss such a thing," puffed a fat bishop from New York, who had overheard the conversation. "This would mean nothing less than ochlocracy. Representative government is all right, but this referendum means downright mob rule. It is un-American, it is unconstitutional and leads to anarchy."

"Pardon me, sir," replied the Swiss, suavely, "but has it not been said: 'By their fruits ye shall know them?' Are you agreed to that?"

"Yes," replied the bishop, stiffly.

"Very well; here are the facts: The referendum was opposed at first in Switzerland by the wealthy and the learned, the conservative and reactionary forces of society. To-day, after a trial of over a quarter of a century its chief opponents are the most radical Socialists, who find the great body of the people too conservative in their movements. In fact, the Federal referendum has defeated more bills than it has passed. The referendum upon Federal statute laws was secured in 1874. From that date until 1913 the National Congress passed 273 measures of a general character, upon which the referendum could have been demanded. The referendum was actually demanded upon only 31 of these laws, of which 12 were adopted and 19 rejected by the people. During this period 30 amendments to the Federal Constitution have been submitted to the people, of which 14 were adopted and 16 rejected. Do you see anything dangerous about that?"

"Well, no—ah—of course; I was just—er—venturing an opinion. I have given the matter little study or thought. Perhaps there may be some truth in what you say," and he waddled off wheezing and perspiring and—who knows—perhaps thinking.

The referendum is not altogether new to the people of the United States. We use it in every State in the Union, except Delaware, when adopting or altering a State constitution. In 15 States the capital can not be changed, in 11 no law can be passed for incurrence of debt not specified in the constitution, and in 7 no laws can be passed establishing banking corporations without recourse to the referendum. Many other States make the referendum compulsory for a multitude of different kinds of legislation. The custom of referring to popular vote a proposition of a purely local nature, such as voting bonds to purchase a park, a light or water plant, to build schoolhouses, or what not, is very common in American cities and is the legislative referendum pure and simple.

During the past 15 years the initiative and referendum have made such progress in American States and cities as to make of this movement toward effective democracy perhaps the most significant political fact of our time. By decisive majorities they have been made a part of the fundamental law of the land by the voters of South Dakota in 1898, Utah in 1900, Oregon in 1902, Nevada in 1905 and 1912, Montana in 1906, Oklahoma in 1907, Maine and Missouri in 1908, Arkansas and Colorado in 1910, Arizona and California in 1911, Nebraska, Idaho, Washington, and Ohio in 1912, and Michigan in 1913.

But while this record shows the widespread acceptance and triumph of the principle of popular sovereignty, it is just as well to remember that in the States of South Dakota, Maine, Montana, and Washington the people are not allowed the right to initiate amendments to their State constitutions, and that various "jokers" have been embodied in the South Dakota, Montana, and Oklahoma provisions for the initiative and referendum which have largely prevented the people of these States from making a successful use of these instruments of democracy.

Moreover, the fact must not be ignored that in several States the constitutional amendments for direct legislation have been so drawn as to give the people little real control, and in two cases absolutely no control, over their government. For example, in Utah and Idaho only the "general principle" of direct legislation was incorporated into the constitution, the details of the system being left to legislative enactment. The result has been that for the past 13 years the Legislature of Utah has stubbornly refused to pass the necessary enabling act, and the people of that State have never been permitted the use of the initiative and referendum. In like manner, in November, 1912, the people of Idaho passed a similar amendment, but the legislature, which met in January, 1913, refused to carry out the clearly understood mandate of the people.

Thus far in the year 1913 the Legislatures of North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Texas have submitted amendments which will be voted on by the people at the general election of 1914, and the Legislature of Iowa has passed an amendment which, if indorsed by the legislature meeting in 1915, will be submitted to the people of that State in 1916. But, unfortunately, the Wisconsin constitutional amendment is the only one passed this year which can be regarded as an honest and effective effort to make practical use of the principle of the initiative and referendum. Such provisions as that in the Texas amendment, requiring a petition of 20 per cent of the voters in the State to invoke either the initiative or the referendum, is an absurdity upon the face of it, and practically renders the law inoperative.

However, in splendid contrast to some of these other States, Oregon, Colorado, Arkansas, California, and Arizona have provided for an intelligent and effective use of the initiative and referendum.

The people of Illinois and of the other States which are thinking of adopting the principle of direct legislation are beginning to see clearly by this time that it is far better to have no legislation whatever upon the subject than to pass a law so filled with restrictions and "jokers" that it would be of no use whatever as an instrument of democracy, and serve only to discredit the great principle of direct popular control of legislation.

The movement toward real democracy has become so irresistible that the platforms of all political parties, except in the most reactionary States, contain planks demanding direct legislation.

In the future the most pernicious enemies of democracy will be, not the open and honest opponents of this principle, but the crafty and unscrupulous political tricksters, who, with hypocritical and sonorous phrases on their lips, seek to betray the principle of initiative and referendum by slipping provisions into the law which either render it inoperative or render its operation ineffectual. Let us make no mistake. The real danger to popular government lies in the Judas kiss of its professed friends, with the passwords of democracy on their lips, perfidious legislative "jokers" in their hands, the golden shekels of plutocracy in their pockets, and treason to the people in their hearts.

Voters of Illinois, send as representatives to the legislature in the future only men whose record in the past and whose attitude at present make them stand out, like Cæsar's wife, as absolutely above

suspicion in their loyal and whole-hearted devotion to the principle of real and effective popular sovereignty.

It is this feature of the Swiss Republic—the power of the people to thwart all legislation destructive of their best interests and to enact into law any and all measures that will minister to their welfare—which is the kill and cure of corruption in politics. It is this feature which has made the statesmanship of Switzerland at once conservative and constructive, which has in truth made this little mass of mountains, forests, and lakes the "model republic of the world."

A striking illustration of the value of this institution came a week or so later when I went to Interlaken. There I met a Yale student, a native of Connecticut, who had never seen anything higher than the Berkshire Hills. Very early in our acquaintance I discovered in him a constitutional prejudice against certain categories of ideas which he termed "advanced," and especially against any suggestion that squinted in the direction of an extension of the sphere of government. This feeling of his gave rise to some very interesting discussions and amusing episodes. I recall one especially memorable conversation. He had become so enthusiastic over the Swiss mountains, lakes, and people that he actually proposed establishing himself permanently in the country.

"I will offer you," I said, "the same advice that Punch gave to a man about to be married—'don't!' If you feel that you have outgrown New England, you are ready for the West. There you will meet kindred spirits, graduates from every State in the East."

"What part of the country are you from?"

"I am from the heart of the country—the great Mississippi Valley."

"You don't mean to say," he broke forth, "that you are from the region where the Progressives, Bryan Democrats, and Populists hail from?"

"I am from the region which started the struggle for the freedom of the slave, and which has generally been in the van of the forces which have been fighting the fight of the people against organized greed."

"But didn't I understand that you were a Harvard man, and that you have been studying politics abroad for several years?"

I nodded an affirmative.

"Surely," he continued, with a gleam of hope in his eye, "you don't believe in those half-baked, a million times exploded socialistic vagaries of the government-ownership cranks?"

"For instance?"

"Oh, government railroads and telegraphs, state monopoly of liquor, and all that other balderdash you hear from the people who know nothing of economics or——"

"Listen for an instant," I replied. "Did you know that the government-ownership cranks are in control of Switzerland?"

"Go ahead," he responded, "amuse yourself! If you get dangerous I'll have you taken to a hospital."

"Do you see that man?" I said, pointing to a Herculean figure just entering the smoking room. "That is Herr Z——, a Swiss captain of industry. He is now engaged in one of the most remarkable

engineering feats of modern times—building a railroad up the Jungfrau. I had a most interesting conversation with him the other day. Would you like to meet him?"

He assented, and we approached the Swiss magnate. After presenting him I said, "Herr Z——, does Switzerland own her own telegraphs, telephones, and railroads?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does the Government manage an express company and diligence lines in connection with the post office?"

"Yes, yes! But why do you ask?"

"And does the Government have a monopoly on spirits, and is it contemplating one on tobacco? Does it have an inheritance and income tax, the initiative and referendum, and proportional representation?"

"Of course, we have all these institutions, and more," said Herr Z——, "but why do you ask? Surely you knew this before?"

"Yes; but I am sorry to say that here is a young man to whom all this is not only unexpected, but startling. Tell us, then, has experience proved that it is best for the Government to own and control these natural monopolies?"

"If not, we should not be continually adding new ones as fast as they become monopolies. This plan is a complete success—it is beneficial to rich and poor alike. The only ones injured are those who try to make illegitimate monopoly profits. It checkmates their game to the advantage of all legitimate business."

"But does not this system develop much rascality and rottenness among Government officials?"

"Not at all. Most decidedly no. Corruption in politics, wherever it exists on a large scale, is chiefly the result of powerful private monopolies influencing to their own advantage the affairs of state. There is but one remedy for this: Monopoly control of Government must give way to Government ownership and control of monopolies. But this is not the whole story. This method works well because our officials are honest, partly because there are no great private monopolies here attempting to influence them, and partly because in this country the politicians have but a limited control of the Government. If politicians were allowed to run the Government here, as they do in many other countries, the advent of Government ownership would mean merely a change from monopolistic control of politicians to politician control of monopolies. But this vicious circle has been avoided, because in Switzerland, with the people themselves, lies final jurisdiction."

I thanked him while the Yale graduate departed to walk off an attack of acute mental indigestion.

At Basle, a few days later, my Yale friend proposed that we get some Cook's circular tickets and devote a fortnight to making a grand tour of Switzerland.

"Cook's tickets," he explained, "will be not only cheaper than tickets bought from place to place, but also much less troublesome. And do not overlook the fact," he added, as he started for Cook's office, "that this is an instance of a private company improving on the arrangements of your government railroads."

"Don't get any ticket for me," I shouted after him, for, in spite of a sneaking feeling that he was right, I determined not to give in

until I had played my last card. Hastening down to the station I discovered not only that the Government sold circular tickets at reduced rates, but that it had recently introduced a new form of ticket, called an "abonnement general," good for continuous travel during two weeks, a month, or six weeks, on all main railroad and steamship lines in the country. I gleefully bought a second-class 15-day abonnement for $11 and hastened back to the hotel, where I found my friend so pleased with his circular ticket, for which he had paid about one-third more, that I hadn't the heart to say anything about my own purchase.

When our tickets were examined on the train he glanced at mine in an inquiring sort of way, but I merely remarked that I had got hold of a new combination and would know after a few days' trial whether or not it was a success. At Lucerne, where we took a boat ride up and down the lake several times just for the lazy delightfulness of the trip, he seemed annoyed at always having to pay while my ticket gave me the right to ride whenever I liked "without money and without price." At Rorschack, on Lake Constance, where we made a little side trip to St. Gall and Appenzell before going up to the Falls on the Rhine, again he appeared suddenly disconcerted at being obliged to pay the regular fare while I, like a railroad magnate traveling on a pass, had to give the conductor only a glimpse of my magical abonnement. The climax came, however, when on our return to Basle we decided to go over to Arolla for a month's mountain climbing. The discovery that I still had time to make the trip before the expiration of my ticket whereas his carfare would amount to about $5 made him too furious for words.

While talking over this trip with the hotel porter he found that by sending our baggage straight through to Arolla we could go by rail and steamer to Frutigen, thence on foot over the Gemmi Pass to the baths of Leuk, and from there on again by diligence, rail, and our own feet to Arolla.

"It will cost about $10," he told me, "to express both trunks and our three valises to Arolla, but I believe the trip will be worth it."

When the porter, after attending to the shipping, presented us with a bill for $2.85 the Yale man suggested that there must be some mistake. "Didn't I tell you," he demanded, "to send our baggage to the Hotel Mont Collon at Arolla in the Valais?"

"Yes," said the porter; "and so I did."

"But," he urged, "it takes about 10 hours by train, 6 hours by diligence, and 2½ hours by mule to get to Arolla. Do you mean to tell me that the express company charges only $2.85 for transporting that mass of baggage up there?"

"Don't worry him," I said; "you forget that here we are not being robbed by an express company, as is our custom at home, but are being served by that wonderful institution, the Swiss Postal Department."

After our descent from Arolla on several occasions I invited him to go with me to investigate the workings of the cantonal and federal institutions. At Glaurus we went to see the Government salt mines, and at other places inspected Government coal mines, cement factories, gunpowder factories, etc.; but he never became enthusiastic over these trips, seeming at once to lose all interest in an enterprise when he learned that it was managed by the Government.

One day we started from Martigny to walk across the Tete Noir to Chamonix, meaning to return in two days and go on with our party to Zermatt, but the air was so exhilarating and the mountains so enticing that we could not resist the temptation to spend two or three days climbing the smaller peaks in the vicinity of Mount Blanc. We had left behind both our letters of credit, and when finally we were able to tear ourselves away and had paid our guide, our porter, and our hotel bills we suddenly discovered that we had barely enough money left to get us to Geneva. On arriving there we were on the point of wiring our friends at Martigny for funds when we saw a pawnshop, and my friend rushed in and pawned a diamond scarfpin.

"I suppose this is the last of my pin," he said as he came out, "but it was the easiest and quickest way to get the money."

As we were passing through Geneva the following week he stopped and redeemed the pin. The fee was so ridiculously small that he felt called upon to expostulate, though not perhaps so profanely as he did when bills were too large. The attendant looked at him pityingly and said: "Young man, we are here to serve the public, not to take advantage of its necessities. You have paid the regular fee. I have nothing to do with the charge; this is a Government institution."

He sneaked out and said nothing, but I could see that he was very "hard hit."

A month or so later, finding ourselves in Zurich, we went to see one of the famous "relief stations," where men who are tramping from town to town looking for work find clean quarters, a wholesome moral atmosphere, and nourishing food, all at no cost. There are 36 such stations in the canton of Zurich alone, all supported at the public expense.

The place seemed quite as comfortable as our Salvation Army lodging houses, and its inmates apparently were an honest, self-respecting lot, who regarded the station not as a charitable institution but as a very proper convenience provided by a wise Government for the unemployed members of its industrial army. Some of them were young fellows taking advantage of this opportunity to see the world, to learn some new tricks in their trades, and to prospect for better paying jobs; others were men in the prime of life, genuine "out of works" anxiously looking for regular employment; while still others belonged to the class of grizzled veterans of industry who, being a little the worse for the wear, invariably are the first to be laid on the shelf in times of economic depression.

I asked one of them if he had ever been in a labor colony. "No," he said, flushing slightly, "it may some time come to that, but when I get too old to keep my place in the ranks I hope with the aid of my children that I shall be able to get a little truck farm. Labor colonies are places where those of us who have failed, but who are not yet quite ready for the scrap heap or the bone pile, are enabled to contribute somewhat to their own support. They are a mild form of charity, but their inmates none the less are paupers."

There is a free employment bureau in each station, and the management is authorized to supply clothes and shoes to those in dire need. In some cases it gives to men who are completely "broke"

50 or 75 cents for use in case of an emergency. When any of them are ill, they are sent at once to the splendid public hospitals.

"Doesn't this sort of thing have a tendency to encourage idleness and thriftlessness?" I asked of the superintendent.

"Not at all," he replied; "in fact, quite the contrary. We are most careful to discriminate between the worker and the bum. The whole mission of these stations is, by putting the men in the way of taking care of themselves, to keep the temporarily idle worker from degenerating into a bum. Every lodger is required to show his 'traveling warrant,' a sort of industrial passport which is stamped and dated at each station, thus preserving a complete record of each man's movements. Anyone who has had no work for three months or who refuses to work or who has no 'traveling warrant' is relegated immediately to the workhouse. Moreover, as a rule, no one is allowed to stop at the same station more than once in six months."

At Geneva we called on M. Jean Sigg, the Genevan representative of the federal workingmen's secretary, an official who is paid by the Government and elected by the labor unions. This secretary has done much good work in a variety of ways, such as collecting statistics, advising the unions as well as their individual members, and helping to settle labor troubles by arbitration. We discussed with M. Sigg the interesting experiments which have been carried on in several cantons with insurance against lack of employment. He said the results had not yet been decisive for or against the system.

"In addition to all these palliative measures," he continued, "Switzerland, by constantly increasing its facilities for technical education, has been increasing the industrial efficiency of its workers and decreasing their liability to loss of employment; but we feel that if there is any one lesson which our varied experience teaches us, it is this—that only by solving the greater problems of the organization of industry and the distribution of wealth can the question of the unemployed be effectually disposed of. This question is but an outward symptom of a deep-seated social disease; the exploitation by one man of another, or, in its aggravated form, the exploitation of all men by huge soulless corporate monsters. When once we have healed ourselves of this dread disease, quickly the army of unemployed, with all its camp followers of vice and crime, will fold its tents and silently steal away, and its departure this time will be final."

During the latter part of the summer the Yale man never seemed to tire of questioning all sorts and conditions of men about the practical workings of Swiss institutions. On one occasion he unearthed a perfect mine of information by cross-examining a Swiss fellow traveler while going from Geneva to Berne. "Tell me," he demanded, "your telephone and telegraph service is cheap and your express charges, diligence, steamer, and railroad fares are low. But we are told by many college professors and most newspapers and magazines in America that were our Government to enter business, not being as economical and sagacious as a private company, it must do one of two things—give inferior service at high rates or run at a loss and make up the deficit in taxes. Your Government service is excellent; your rates are low. Do you have a yearly deficit?"

"True, our rates are low and our service good," answered the Swiss, "and once in a great while some branch of the Government

service has a deficit. This is advertised abroad with the greatest publicity by private companies to discourage Government enterprises elsewhere. But, on the average, our Government enterprises make a handsome profit and lessen our taxes enormously."

"Well and good," interrupted the Yale man doggedly, "with some of your Government concerns, but you will hardly pretend, I think, to be proud of the fact that your Government helps pay your taxes from the profits of an alcohol monopoly; it is the devil's own business."

"But our Government does nothing of the kind," said the other; "the profits from the sale of alcohol do not replace taxes, but are divided among the Cantons and are added to the existing educational funds, and a goodly percentage each year is devoted to fighting intemperance or to charities made necessary by intemperance. The result has been that since the advent of the Government monopoly, December 23, 1886, the consumption of alcohol has fallen off 40 per cent. The object of this Government monopoly is, indeed, not revenue, for Switzerland stands unique among the nations of the world in this, that, far from going deeper in debt every year, she holds property, on January 1, 1913, called the Federal fortune, amounting to 241,144,619 francs, or $48,228,924. Her national debt[1] is only 125,069,774 francs, or $25,013,955, leaving a Federal fortune free and clear of 116074,845 francs, or $23,214,969. In addition to this the separate Cantons, communes, and municipalities have fortunes amounting up into the millions."

All this, I thought, in a country which, as some one has said, "is the poorest in Europe from the standpoint of natural advantages."

Some of the Swiss towns are so rich that they levy no taxes; and at Buchs, in St. Gall, in addition to this exemption, every citizen receives gratis more than an acre of land which he may cultivate, firewood for the winter, and grazing ground for several cattle. The town of Soleme, in Schaffhausen, has forests, pastures, and cultivated lands worth about 6,000,000 francs. The Canton of Obwald, with 15,000 inhabitants, has lands and forests valued at 11,350,000 francs. These instances could be multiplied almost indefinitely, for nearly every commune and Canton has public lands. The important fact, however, is not that the Swiss governments, National, State, and municipal, are wealthy, but that the wealth of the country is so diffused among the people that, roughly speaking, two-thirds of the heads of families are agricultural landholders.

That evening as we were having a quiet smoke the Yale man reopened the discussion. "I have been carrying on some investigations of my own," he said, "and I have discovered that, in spite of all the admirable features connected with the Swiss form of government, there is one very undesirable feature which the Swiss, like the rest of us, seem unable to get rid of."

"And what is that?"

"Bosses," he replied pensively, rather than triumphantly, for insensibly of late he had been assuming a more sympathetic attitude toward Swiss political institutions. "From what I can learn, every

[1] This does not include the railroad debt, which is being liquidated automatically every year from the net profits of the roads, and which is more than counterbalanced by the value of the railroads themselves.

city and Canton has its political boss, who dominates the party, and through it dominates the municipality or Canton, just as our bosses rule our cities and States at home. Human nature is human nature after all, no matter what political methods are employed. Men love to be led, and, so far as I can see, the rank and file of the voters are led around by the nose here, just as they are in every other so-called 'self-governing' country in the world."

"I would not for a moment attempt to deny that there is a good deal of truth in what you say," I responded, "but I think perhaps you have overlooked an important distinction. With one or two exceptions Swiss political leaders, or 'bosses,' as you call them, have gained their ascendancy, as have Bryan, Roosevelt, La Follette, and Wilson, principally by the ability and desire they have shown to serve the people and only secondarily by their efficiency in building up strong political organizations. Nearly all the political leaders of all political parties in Switzerland are of this type, so far as I have been able to discover. The Croker-Platt type, which robs or betrays the people in order to enrich itself and its friends, is not to be found anywhere in Switzerland except in the Canton of Fribourg. There they have a political 'boss' of the true American type; but, on the other hand, Fribourg is the only Canton in Switzerland which has no initiative and referendum. This difference, you will see, is absolutely fundamental.

"But let me make myself plain on another point," I continued. "I do not harbor the delusion that Switzerland is a paradise. It is true that the Swiss have less grinding poverty and less vice per capita than any other country in the world, with the possible exception of New Zealand; yet one finds numbers of poor people, lazy people, and dishonest people, as well as much drunkenness, in Switzerland. While it is evident the Swiss have disposed of many problems which at present are perplexing the rest of the world, it is equally evident that they have many serious problems still confronting them. Will they be able to solve these problems? I do not know. Will they continue to progress in the future as they have in the past? I hope so; but even more do I hope that the United States and the rest of the world will be able to put to practical use the splendid discoveries which the Swiss already have made in the realm of statecraft."

"Curious, isn't it," mused my compatriot between puffs at his pipe; "the Swiss are the only people in the world with a larger capital than their indebtedness, and yet," he exclaimed, suddenly rising and speaking with great earnestness, "what does that amount to? Their greatest capital is in the civic sagacity, civic energy, and civic purity of their citizens. Most of their voters have made politics their business, and statesmanlike politics has made of every legitimate business a success. I am very much tempted when I get home to go in for politics myself.

"Switzerland has perhaps more numerous Government activities," he continued, "and yet less 'paternalism' than any country in the world. I could not understand this for a long time, but that was because I had not yet achieved the national point of view. According to that view, the people, by means of the initiative and referendum, are the Government, and consequently whatever it does for them is self-help and not 'paternalism.' Switzerland has worked out

not only a successful political democracy but also to a certain extent a successful industrial democracy. It has only one or two lonesome little corporation-owned 'bosses' and no Napoleons of finance, no oil kings, no robber coal barons."

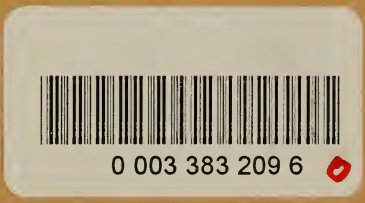
I was so astonished I could only grasp his hand.

"If the American people," he continued, "could see what I have seen this summer—progressive democracy in practice—they could not fail to realize that our present era of corporation regulation is of interest chiefly as the precursor of a more fundamental and rational régime of gradually and conservatively worked out social reconstruction."

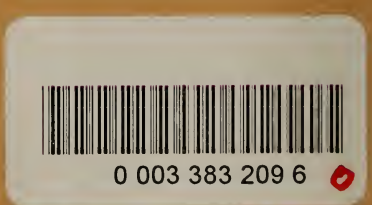
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